



ACCESS CURRENTS

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Advisory Committee Presents Report on Updated 508 Standards

On April 3, the Telecommunications and Electronic and Information Technology Advisory Committee (TEITAC) presented its report to the Access Board on updating accessibility criteria for information and communication technologies. The committee's report recommends revisions to the Board's standards for electronic and information technology covered by section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. It also addresses updates to guidelines for telecommunications products issued by the Board under section 255 of the Telecommunication Act.

"We firmly believe that the recommendations of this report will lead to new versions of the standards and guidelines that comprehensively cover accessibility in a dynamic and innovative marketplace," stated Mike Paciello of the Paciello Group who co-chaired the committee. Co-chair Jim Tobias of Inclusive Technologies concurred, noting that "this committee, through the incredible range of expertise and talent it enlisted, indeed rose to the challenge and was not shy in confronting a host of complex issues before it."



TEITAC co-chairs Jim Tobias (l) and Mike Paciello (r) present a copy of the committee's report to Board chair Tricia Mason.

The committee's report details recommended changes to both the substance and the structure of the standards and guidelines. The recommendations, adopted by consensus under a process common to Federal advisory committees, specify updates that are responsive to market trends and technological innovations that continuously reshape the range of products covered. These include technologies used for communication, computing, storage, duplication, and production, among others. Access is addressed for all types of disabilities, including those that are sensory, physical, speech-related, or cognitive in nature.

Organized by the Board in July 2006, the committee met regularly over the course of its charter and held numerous teleconferences in between meetings. The committee's 41 members comprised a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including representatives from industry, disability groups, standard-setting bodies in the U.S. and abroad, and government agencies, among others. In their deliberations, committee members addressed a range of issues, including new or convergent technologies, market forces, compliance concerns, and international harmonization. Recognizing the importance of standardization across markets worldwide, the committee coordinated its work with other standard-setting bodies in the U.S. and abroad. Representatives on the committee from the World Wide Web Consortium, the European Union, Canada, Australia, and Japan greatly facilitated this effort.

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The committee sought to balance the need for detailed criteria with an approach that accommodates the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of the technologies covered. Many people, from product designers and engineers to procurers and end users, have called for clear delineation of what makes a product accessible for compliance purposes. However, the committee determined that product-specific criteria will not keep pace with innovative trends and market forces which enhance the capabilities of products and blur their categorization. Convergent technologies, for example, support the growing demand for all-in-one products, such as mobile devices that offer voice and text communication, web browsing, and media players.

The committee's report puts forth a revised set of performance criteria that describe access capabilities for products generally. The committee organized these provisions to serve as a framework for technical specifications that have been updated to address hardware, user interfaces and electronic content, audio-visual players, displays, and content, real-time voice communication, and authoring tools. Unlike the current section 508 standards, these provisions are organized by the features or capabilities of a product, instead of discreet product types. The recommendations contain advisory and background information on the performance and technical provisions, including references to related standards, and update defined terms and provisions covering documentation, support, and maintenance. The report also advises the Board on considerations for future updates, supplementary guidance materials and tools, compliance testing, and further research.

The Board will propose updates to the section 508 standards and telecommunications guidelines based on its review of the committee's report. The Board's proposal will be made available for public comment. The report is available on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/sec508/refresh/report/. For additional information, contact Tim Creagan at creagan@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0016 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Members of the Telecommunications and Electronic and Information Technology Advisory Committee

Adobe Systems, Inc.	Information Technology Association of America
American Association of People with Disabilities	Information Technology Industry Council
American Council of the Blind	Japanese Standards Association
American Foundation for the Blind	Microsoft Corporation
AOL, LLC	National Association of State Chief Information Officers
Apple, Inc.	National Center on Disability and Access to Education
Assistive Technology Industry Association	National Federation of the Blind
Association of Technology Act Programs	National Network of Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers
AT&T	Panasonic Corporation of North America
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CTIA — The Wireless Association	Telecommunications Industry Association
Dell, Inc.	The Paciello Group, LLP
Easter Seals	Trace Research and Development Center
European Commission	Usability Professionals' Association
Hearing Loss Association of America	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Australia)	U.S. Social Security Administration
IBM	WGBH National Center for Accessible Media
Inclusive Technologies	World Wide Web Consortium — Web Accessibility Initiative
Industry Canada	



Tracy R. Justesen

Tracy Justesen Elected Board Chair

Tracey Justesen, who represents the U.S. Department of Education on the Board, was elected chair at a meeting of the Board in April. As Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Justesen is a principal adviser to the Secretary of Education on special education, vocational rehabilitation, and disability and rehabilitation research and oversees a wide range of federal programs in these areas. He previously worked as an attorney-advisor in the Disability Rights Section of the Department of Justice and served as the Department's liaison to the Board. Justesen succeeds Tricia Mason, a public member from Arlington, Virginia. John Wyvill, a public member from Lincoln, Nebraska, was elected vice chair.

AIA and Board Convene Workshop on Assisted Transfer

On April 1st, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Access Board conducted a workshop on design considerations and practices for assisted transfer in health and residential care facilities. Organized by the AIA's Design for Aging Knowledge Community and its Academy of Architecture for Health, the event brought together designers, facility operators, care providers, and others to discuss transfer practices and their implications on

the design of toilet and bathing facilities. A panel of invited experts gave presentations on patient care and transfer, rehabilitation engineering, and relevant ergonomic and design research.



Workshop presenters included (l-r) Dr. Arun Garg of the University of Wisconsin's Center for Ergonomics, Mary Matz, MSPH of the Veterans Health Administration, Molly Follette Story, MS of the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Accessible Medical Instrumentation, and Jon Sanford of the Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access.

Participants discussed current design practices and trends, including those identified through earlier Board research. Discussion focused on how existing design requirements, including those established by the Board under the Americans with Disabilities Act, do not accommodate practices and devices for assisted transfer because they are based on criteria for independently conducted transfers. Conclusions drawn in the workshop, including recommendations for further research, will be used by the Board in determining next steps in this initiative. A report from the proceedings will be posted on the AIA's website at a later date. For further information, contact Marsha Mazz at mazz@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0020 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

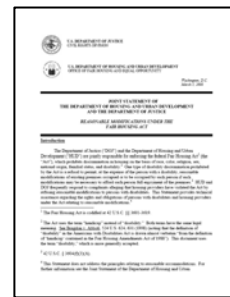
Advisory Committee on Emergency Transportable Housing Convenes

The Board's Emergency Transportable Housing Advisory Committee held its most recent meeting March 27th and 28th in Washington, D.C. The committee, which includes representatives from disability groups, industry and code groups, and government agencies, continued its examination of how accessibility requirements for residential facilities can be applied to housing trailers procured by the government for use in natural disasters in light of identified design and engineering constraints. Committee members deliberated on consensus recommendations covering how accessibility criteria should be tailored for these types of trailers which will be included in a report to the Board.

The committee plans to convene by teleconference to complete work on its report. For further information, contact Marsha Mazz at mazz@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0020 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY), or visit the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/eth/.

HUD and DOJ Release Guidance on Fair Housing Act

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of disability, as well as race or color, gender, national origin, familial status and religion. It covers housing in the public and private sectors and bans discrimination in any aspect of selling or renting housing. The law protects the right of residents or tenants to make reasonable modifications to properties that are necessary for access, such as installing ramps, widening doorways, and installing grab bars. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) enforces the law in partnership with the Department of Justice (DOJ). Both agencies recently released detailed guidance on policies governing access modifications. This material explains the types of modifications that are covered and who is responsible for them. Through explanations and examples, the document clarifies many of the questions that have come up in enforcement. It is available on HUD's website at www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/disabilities/ (listed under "HUD Resources"). An earlier guide on reasonable accommodations required by the act is also available.



In addition to reasonable modifications and accommodations, the Fair Housing Act requires new multi-family housing to be accessible or adaptable according to recognized design and construction criteria. Information on design and other requirements of the act is available on HUD's main website and a dedicated site at www.fairhousingfirst.org.

Board Town Meeting to Take Place in St. Louis on May 12th

This year's town meeting will be held in St. Louis at the America's Center on May 12th from 12:30 – 3:00 in conjunction with the National ADA Symposium. The event will enable members of the public to advise the Board on topics and issues of concern to them. For more information, contact Kathy Johnson at johnson@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0041 (v) or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Access Currents is a free newsletter issued by the Access Board every other month by mail and e-mail. Send questions or comments to news@access-board.gov or call (800) 872-2253 ext. 0026 (voice) or (800) 993-2822 (TTY). Mailing address: 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 1000; Washington, D.C. 20004-1111.

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